

Children's Administration



Performance Report 2003

Public and Legislative Accountability for
Child Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being

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Uma Ahluwalia, Assistant Secretary,
Children's Administration

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Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

We who believe in children cannot rest until they're grown

Numbers to Remember

To Report Child Abuse or Neglect

1-800-562-5624

or

1-866-EndHarm

To Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent

1-888-794-1794

Childcare Resource and Referral Services

1-800-446-1114



“I am honored to work among those who strive to keep children safe and families intact.”

*~ Uma Ahluwalia
Assistant Secretary
Children's Administration*



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message

from the Assistant Secretary



It is my pleasure to present the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration seventh Annual Performance Report.

As the newly appointed Assistant Secretary for the Children's Administration, I am both humbled and hopeful to be a part of an administration that performs vital work in our community. I am humbled to be charged with carrying on the legacy left by my predecessor, Rosie Oreskovich; a woman who cared deeply about children and was unwavering in her commitment. I am hopeful because as I have traveled the state, spending time with field staff and meeting personally with stakeholders, I have observed that same kind of caring and commitment at every level of the administration and throughout the state.

It is a direct result of the passion and dedication demonstrated by CA personnel that the administration made significant progress in fiscal year 2003 toward improving outcomes for children and families.

- Fewer families than ever met the criteria for chronic abuse indicating that we are improving our methods for keeping children safe and supporting families.
- Children for whom reunification was a safe and viable plan, were reunited with their families within one year in 83 percent of the cases, well exceeding the national standard.
- More children than ever who could not return home were successfully placed with relatives, preserving powerful family ties.
- More children were adopted than at any time in our history.
- Headquarters and seven field offices met the rigorous best practice standards in a public child welfare organization, receiving accreditation by *The International Office on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc.*

While the Children's Administration has done much to improve the quality of life for children and families, we still have much work to do.

- We must develop strategies to improve practice consistency throughout Washington while maintaining the flexibility needed to provide culturally competent, community-based services.
- We must continue to identify innovative ways of recruiting, retaining and supporting quality foster homes.
- We must improve service integration through increased collaboration with our community partners particularly in the areas of mental health treatment for children, substance abuse treatment for families and Community Child Protection Teams.
- We must increase our ability to utilize outcome data toward improving practice.
- We must recognize that our long serving workforce is retiring at an increasing rate and we have to make sure that there is a whole new generation of child welfare professionals who will not rest until our children are grown.
- We must work toward decreasing the disproportionality of minority children in long-term care.

As we work together toward better practice and better outcomes, we will assess ourselves and subject ourselves to external evaluation in an effort to monitor our progress and we will provide updates about our progress via Websites and publications.

I am also honored to work among those who strive to keep children safe and families intact. I recognize that while all of us work very hard and each of us fulfills a vital role, it is the worker in the field who must make tough decisions at a moment's notice about the life of a vulnerable child who has the hardest job in the administration. It is a privilege to be a part of their lifesaving, life-enhancing work.

I urge all the readers of this report to join the Children's Administration in continuing to make important contributions to improving the lives of children and families.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Uma Ahluwalia".

Uma Ahluwalia, MSW, MHA
Assistant Secretary

The Children's Administration
dedicates the 2003 annual
Performance Report to the
memory and legacy of Rosalyn
"Rosie" Oreskovich. We are
committed to carrying on the
good works initiated by Rosie
to ensure that all children in
Washington State are afforded
their birthrights of safety,
permanency and well-being.

In memory of Rosie



Rosalyn "Rosie" Oreskovich ☾ June 22, 1948 – February 28, 2003

We who believe in children cannot rest until they're grown

I think if *We* all want to make Rosie happy, we ought to go out and do something nice for a kid whether it's our own or somebody else's.

☞ *Charlie Reed – former Deputy Secretary, Department of Social and Health Services*

Rosie was a tireless spokesperson *who* improved the delivery of quality services to the families and children who needed them most.

☞ *Amy Wong, JD – Contracts Officer, Department of Retirement Systems*

believe in As a leader, Rosie built a team of folks who all protecting kids. Rosie's legacy lives on in you.

☞ *Kathy Leitch – Assistant Secretary, Aging and Disability Services*

Rosie rocked our world with a throbbing beat, a steady drumming; sometimes background music and other times vibrant percussion solos.

Her beat whispered to us, entered our psyches, and told us we all have the power to make our world a loving place for *children*.

☞ *Representative Mary Lou Dickerson – 36th District, Seattle*

We *cannot* forget her and the world cannot help but be a better place because she was once among us.

☞ *Eva Jackson – Area Administrator Region 6, Tumwater Office*

In my seventeen-year connection with the department, many people have come and gone. Rosie's longevity and devotion stands far above the *rest* of the crowd.

☞ *Lonnie Locke – Program Manager, Children's Administration Placement and Permanency Services*

Until we can be certain that every child is safe, secure, loved and nurtured, Rosie's legacy cannot, must not be forgotten.

☞ *Anonymous*

We must ensure that we are able to account for every child in care and know that *they're* safe.

☞ *Rosie Oreskovich – In a 2002 memo to all staff*

In 1994 there was a very small training unit and no Quality Assurance Unit. Once Rosie became Assistant Secretary, she created a large training unit and a vigorous Quality Assurance Unit. In 1994, there was not a data unit, it was hard to get pertinent data about any subject within the Agency. That's how much the agency has *grown*. I think one thing Rosie would say is, "Let's just don't tear down in one year, what it took 20 years to build."

☞ *Dee Wilson – Regional Administration, Region 6, Children's Administration*

Vision

The Children's Administration seeks to be an organization that provides excellent services which produce successful safety, well-being and permanency outcomes for children and families. We strive to be innovative and results driven, responsive to changing needs, accountable, and guided by a commitment to professionalism and excellence in the field of child welfare. We endorse and encourage an environment of trust and mutual respect. We promote teamwork and embrace our partnerships with Tribes, foster parents and communities in the design and delivery of child and family services we would be proud to offer our own families.

Mission

The mission of the Children's Administration is first to protect abused and neglected children, to support the efforts of families to care for and parent their own children safely, and to provide quality care and permanent families for children in partnership with Tribes, foster parents and communities.

Protecting children,
supporting families,
providing quality care
with our partners.



Guiding Principles of the Children's Administration

We Believe Children Who Have Been Abused and Neglected Deserve Quality Services

We believe the safety of children is the first priority when making decisions about where they live when their parents are unable or unwilling to properly care for them. Protecting children is primarily the responsibility of families and communities, and we intervene to protect children only when families are unable to do so. We first seek permanent homes with parents, then with extended family members to maintain important family connections and heritage, and finally seek permanent homes with non-relatives. We support family and community partnerships that protect children, provide stability and expedite permanency in children's placements.

We Support Families and Build on Their Strengths

We believe that families are the best place for children to grow and develop. The family is the best and most effective structure to assure stability, nurturing, care, and safety for its members, and families are responsible to provide for their children and make decisions concerning their children's welfare. We strive to recognize and support family strengths and culture, to discover options, to help families make choices, and to help them understand the results of their choices.

We Join With Foster Parents as Essential Partners in Caring for Children

We embrace the principles of the *Foster Parents' Rights and Responsibilities* statement, which guide the course of the relationship between foster parents and the administration toward a mutual goal of fostering safe, healthy children. We value foster parents as members of the child's team and advocates for children in their care, with the right to a supportive relationship with the agency.

We Partner with Tribes and Communities in Serving Children and Families

We value partnerships with Tribes, communities, and public and private agencies to promote the safe and healthy growth and development of children in their own homes and in out-of-home placement. We encourage open communication and we work with communities to resolve issues. We strive to make decisions openly, with as much consultation and shared decision-making as possible. We support federally and non-federally recognized Tribes and off-reservation Indian organizations and their rights to provide for and nurture their own children.

We Value Diversity and Respect

We value the racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of our clients and staff. We are committed to tolerance and exceptional customer service which reflects respect and appreciation for diverse needs. We strive to provide services to children and families that are individualized, community based, culturally appropriate, and responsive. We work to develop and maintain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the people that we serve and contributes to the quality of life of our clients and the communities that we serve.

We Encourage Excellence in All We Do

We encourage staff to be innovative and resourceful, making efficient use of state resources, while providing exceptional quality service. We strive to be open, caring and capable and to be accountable for the choices we make. Employees deserve to be supported and nurtured so they can support and nurture each other and the families we serve. We are committed to building on the strengths of others and to developing a professional and competent workforce.

Introduction

The Children's Administration strives to provide quality services to Washington's most vulnerable children and their families.

Do you know ?

1. The administration's four priority goal areas?
2. How many people were served by the administration in fiscal year 2003?
3. What percent of the total CA biennium budget is used to purchase services for children in out-of-home care?

Answers may be found on page 58 of this report.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (CA) reports to legislators, community members and those served by the administration regarding decisions, service provision and outcomes.

First and foremost, the administration is responsible for its performance and practices to the children and families served by the agency statewide. In addition, the administration provides information regarding Washington State child welfare practices to others in the community dedicated to the common objective of protecting and providing for vulnerable children. Finally, CA is accountable to the state legislature whose representatives are elected to act on behalf of the interests of all of the aforementioned.

This report is produced annually to provide a quantitative and qualitative account of services provided within a given fiscal year period. This document has, over time, evolved from solely a legislatively mandated statistical account of services and outcomes, to a document that also describes real children in crisis, and real people working diligently to improve the quality of their young lives.

The data provided herein responds to the mandate specified in RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.031 and includes detailed narrative regarding information required by law with reference to the administration's four priority goal areas.

1. Safety
2. Permanency
3. Well-Being
4. Supporting Client Outcomes

The administration has developed a series of performance measures from its management information system designed to collect and store data. All field personnel have access to state, region, office, and service-recipient level data from their desktop computers. This data is accessed and applied to direct practice in an effort to improve both the quality of services and management of fiscal and personnel resources.

Data in this report reflects the period from July 01, 2002, through June 30, 2003, unless otherwise noted and is drawn from two primary sources. The Case and Management Information System (CAMIS) is a fully automated system which stores information regarding referrals, case related activities, contracts, licensing actions and other case-specific data. In addition to CAMIS data, each region reports quarterly on outcomes related to measures that the administration perceives are crucial but for which there is not currently an automated data collection system. The Children's Administration strives continuously to improve data gathering, calculating and reporting methods in an effort to ensure data integrity.

It is imperative to those involved with the development of this document that its readers recognize each "blip on a chart", every photograph, every small graphic and block of text represents the life of a child who has somehow been touched by this administration. The children are, after all, the reason for this publication, the reason for our very existence as an administration.

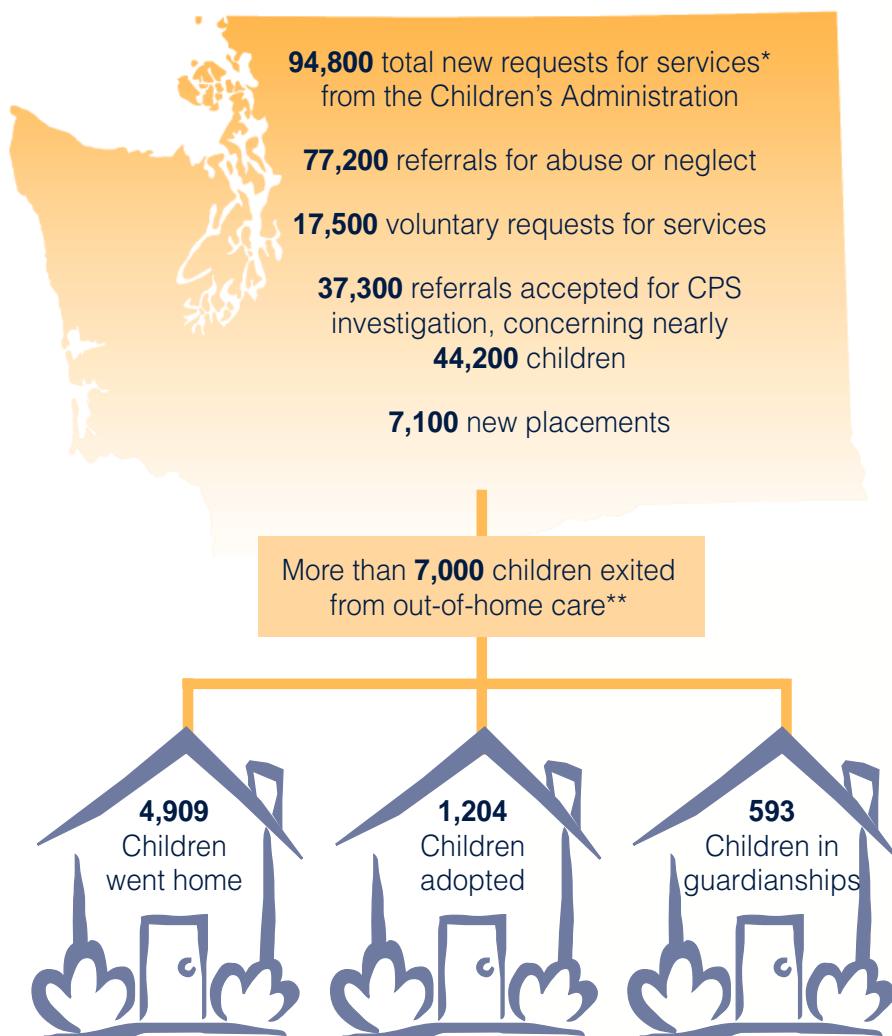
Children's Administration Activities

The Children's Administration touches the lives of more than three percent of the Washington state population annually. In fiscal year 2003, the administration provided services to more than 240,000 individuals. Over 18,000 were children cared for in out-of-home placements. At any given time there are 7,000-8,000 children in homes or facilities licensed or certified by the Children's Administration, and nearly 3,000 children are directly cared for by relatives.

Concerned community members registered referrals of suspected abuse or neglect on approximately one of every 35 children in Washington State. Every referral must be triaged, investigated and met with the appropriate level of service delivery based upon a specific family's needs and in accordance with state and federal law.

Of the children who benefit from CA services, relatively few receive long-term, out-of-home placement services.

Fiscal Year 2003 Children's Administration Service Delivery Activities



* All numbers with the exception of exits from care are rounded to the nearest 100.

** Total exits from out-of-home care is inclusive of "other" which includes: reached age of majority, emancipated, transfer of custody, no exit reason, or deceased.

Overview

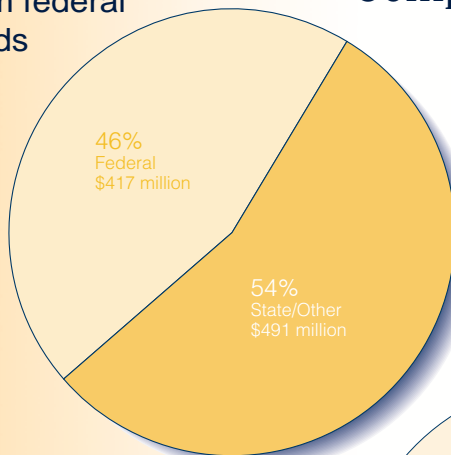
Children's Administration Activities

The Children's Administration endeavors to provide community-based services sensitive to the needs of children and families in the cultural and geographical context within which they live.

The administration provides services in six geographical regions and is further localized through 44 field offices. The offices are located to provide the best possible access to children and families in both urban and rural settings. When specific needs dictate, regional lines may be redrawn and field offices relocated to improve access and enhance customer service.

In an effort to ensure a comprehensive system of checks and balances, direct client services and licensing services are administered through separate divisions. Child abuse and neglect allegations are investigated through the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS also provides child protection, family reconciliation, and foster and adoptive services for children ages birth to eighteen. The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) licenses foster homes and other facilities responsible for the care of children. DLR also responds to and investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in foster care and other state operated and licensed facilities.

Forty-six percent of the budget comes from federal funds



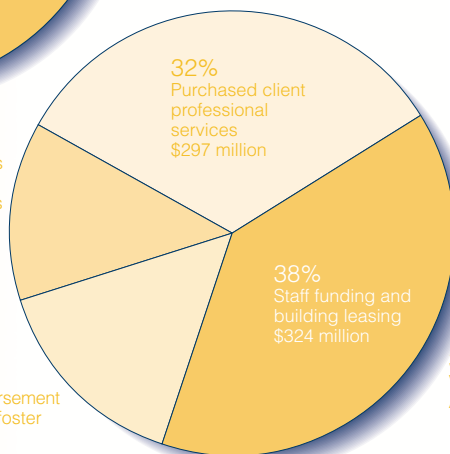
Comprehensive Service Delivery

The Children's Administration provides funding for a wide array of integrated services to children and families. Of the \$907,000,000*

2003-2005 biennium budget, \$563,000,000 or about 62% is used to purchase services provided by over 6,500 foster homes or other out-of-home service providers. In addition, over 9,800 families who have adopted children through the administration receive financial support for the special needs of their adopted children.

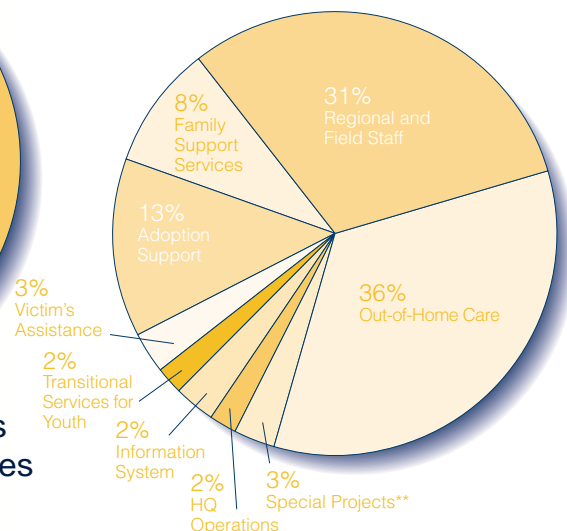
14%
Support to families
adopting children
with special needs
\$122 million

16%
Cost reimbursement
to licensed foster
parents
\$144 million



Over sixty percent of the Children's Administration budget funds services provided by non-employees

Children's Administration funding provides a wide array of services



* Does not include Family Policy Council

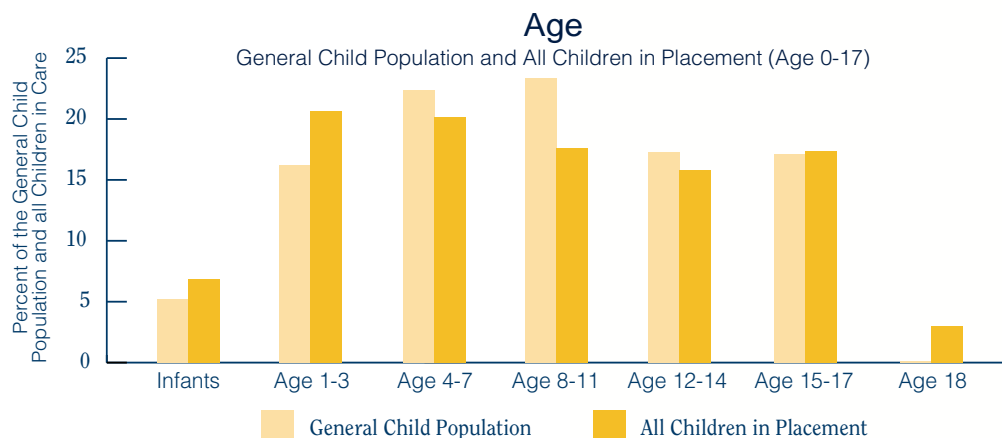
** Special Projects Include: Independent Living Services; Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) grants; Office of Children's Administration Research (OCAR); Staff Development; Academy Training; Quality Improvement Team (QI); Indian Child Welfare and other federal, state and private foundation grant funded programs.

Child Demographics

Child abuse and neglect affects all cross sections of Washington state and the nation. In Washington about 51% of all children are male and 49% are female. That ratio remains the same when applied to children in out-of-home placement.

The age groups of children represented in out-of-home care vary from that of the overall child population of Washington. The greatest percentage of children in the general population is in the 8-11 age group while the greatest proportion of children in out-of-home placement is in the 1-3 age group.

The most notable variation between the general child population and those in out-of-home placement occurs in the proportion of minority children placed in out-of-home care. The most marked difference is in the percent of African American and Native American children. While the Children's Administration, and in fact, the nation have few indicators of the systemic causes of this disparity, the administration has taken proactive measures to address the needs of diverse groups of children. The administration developed an African American unit, worked to improve relationships with various tribal service providers, improved implementation of Indian Child Welfare Act, increased access to multilingual educational and resource information and has made concerted efforts to improve community collaboration.



Gender
General Child Population and all Children in Placement

